



Department of Health

Senior Coroner
Coroner's Office
St Blaise Buildings,
Bromley Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close,
Bromley BRI 3UH

*Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP
Minister of State for Community and Social Care*

*Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS
Tel: 020 7210 4850*

04 JUL 2016

New M. Lynch,

Thank you for your letter of 3 May 2016, following the inquest into the death of Darren Mindham. I was sorry to hear of Mr Mindham's death and wish to extend my condolences to his family.

Your concern in this case focuses on the classification of the drug Pentobarbital, under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, and its subsequent availability and use as a means of suicide. Evidence shows that reducing access to the means of suicide can be effective in reducing the rate of suicide. You have suggested that Pentobarbital could be subject to the stricter controls applied to drugs found in Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

This is not however a matter for the Department of Health. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) makes recommendations to government on the control of dangerous or otherwise harmful drugs, including classification and scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and its regulations. ACMD is an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Home Office and is the lead organisation in this area. I would therefore advise that you re-direct your Regulation 28 letter to the following contact for a response on this matter.

ACMD Secretariat
c/o Home Office
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs Secretariat
1st floor, NE Quarter, Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DP

With regard to methods of suicide, the Department of Health continually monitors trends in suicide data. Where we identify an increase in a particular method of suicide

or observe a new method emerging, we will take appropriate action to reduce access to the means of suicide. One example where we have been successful is in reducing access to paracetamol as a means of suicide. Of course, other drugs are also used in suicide. We continue to have discussions with the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency about practical steps that could be taken in relation to medicines used in suicide.

I hope that this reply is helpful and I am grateful to you for bringing the circumstances of Mr Mindham's death to my attention.

Yours sincerely
Alistair Burt

ALISTAIR BURT

